

Cherilyn Carkhuff  
C&T 5037.002  
Prof: Marjorie Siegel  
Reading Response #1  
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As Lori puts it in Jones, Girls Social Class and Literacy,

"they're thinking screw that- you don't know *shit* about my life how are you *tellin'* me that this is how it is, *you* ain't in my life. Come walk a day in my shoes and you'll see. You give that child an opportunity to *let* you walk in their shoes *through* school through *writing*. And it'll be different.

This statement brought me back many years to *my* first year of teaching. As I recap a similar conversation I had with one of my students concerned mothers, I can't help but now look back at the event through a new lens. A lens of experience from not only teaching diverse students but also through the experience of critically examining myself... as a person, a writer, a reader, etc...

You see... my first experience teaching was in an all black, inner-city, parochial school that consisted of primarily of those considered "lower class." I remember the shock I felt and how defensive I got as I responded to the students mothers accusation that I couldn't possibly be a good teacher for her little "johnny" because I don't know *anything* about his life.

At the time, (I am embarrassed to even admit) I didn't even consider this woman's statement could possibly even be a reality. I also didn't consider the possibility that what she was saying was not a personal jab at me as a person. The "today me" realizes that while we do in fact come from "different walks of life," I can "walk in the shoes of my students" and "learn the details of their lives," through their writing as Jones suggests in Chapter one.



So why is it that I look back at this event so differently today? I think the first reason is that I learned to recognize that I had *socioeconomic, class, and race blinders on*. By looking critically at my own life as a reader and writer I came to see that I did in fact have assumptions about how the world works and that the experiences I perceived as normal may not be so normal to someone else. But... most of all... I learned that it's okay, in fact that in itself is normal.

While reading several of the short stories by Dorothy Allison in her book Trash, I couldn't help but notice how differently our life experiences have shaped us into the people we are today. Jones gave a good example of how she grew up in a family that smoked, so for her it felt strange to go to a friend's home where the parents did not smoke. Because to Jones this family was clearly of an upper class she attached smoking to class. Interesting... I'd like to put some more thought into similar associations I have made over the years.

Something Allison said that really made me take a second look at the privileged perspective I have been coming from was, "I had been a child who believed in books, but I had never found me or mine in print." How sad! Her statement really forces you to re-evaluate where *you* are coming from as a reader or writer. It also ignites a charge in me of determination to make my own contribution to changing the validity of that statement.

I wish I could say that my "blinders" are now off. But something tells me that it's just not totally possible. You will always be a product of the life you live... so again, I wonder why I look back to that incident during my first year of teaching so differently... and if it is not because my blinders are off... it must be because I finally recognized that I was reading with blinders on in the first place.